Amendments to the Specification

On page 1 of the specification, after the title and before the first heading, please insert the following:

-- Cross Reference to Related Applications

This application is a continuation of Application No. 09/687,459, filed October 13, 2000 (now allowed), which claims priority to European Patent Application No. 00402326.3, filed August 21, 2000, which applications are hereby incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 2, line 13, with the following amended paragraph:

Figure 1: Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curves of the fibrosis markers function combining six (alpha2-macroglobulin, alpha2-microglobulin, total bilirubin, gamma globulin, apo A1, and GGT) or ten biochemical factors (same plus albumin, alpha1-microglobulin, beta globulin and ALT) and the age and gender. The areas under the curve were not different: 0.853 ± 0.02 and 0.851 ± 0.02 respectively.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 11, line 21, with the following amended paragraph:

Patients included in the study belonged to a single center cohort, named Hepatite C Pitie-Salpetriere, (DOSVIRC). This cohort included all the patients with hepatitis C (defined as a positive serology by at least a second generation ELISA test) followed in the liver and

gastrointestinal unit of Pitie-Salpetriere Hospital, Paris, France, retrospectively before 1993 and prospectively afterwards (16). A specific questionnaire was filled out for each patient which contained 129 items including social-demographic-administrative data, risk factors, and at each visit clinical, biologic, virologic and treatment items, and histologic data when liver biopsy was performed. The duration of HCV infection was estimated from the date of transfusion or initial exposure to other parenteral sources, and it could not be calculated for patients with sporadic infection or those in whom the source of infection was unknown. Exclusion criteria were the presence of HbsAg or HIV positive antibodies. From August 1997 to March 2000 all informed patients with detectable HCV by PCR undergoing a liver biopsy were pre-included and a blood sample taken the day of biopsy. Exclusion criteria were coinfection with HIV, HBV other liver diseases, and non interpretable liver biopsy.